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Thirteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1712 (2006), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 31 March 2007 and requested me to provide information on progress made in meeting the broad benchmarks laid out in my report of 12 September 2006 (S/2006/743). The present report provides an update on major developments in Liberia, including the progress made in meeting the key benchmarks for the first phase of the Mission's consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal.

II. Major political developments

2. The overall political situation remained generally stable during the period under review. The relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government improved, allowing for the relatively smooth passage of the national forestry reform law in compliance with Security Council resolution 1689 (2006).

3. In furtherance of the spirit of national reconciliation, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf hosted a celebratory dinner to mark the end of Ramadan, which was attended by Muslim leaders, members of the Mandingo ethnic group and former warring faction leaders, including Sekou Damate Conneh of the former Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and Alhaji Kromah of the former United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia. During the event, the President reaffirmed her Government's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance. On 21 November, the President convened a meeting of political stakeholders, which brought together the leaders of registered political parties, many of whom had contested the 2005 presidential elections. The party leaders expressed appreciation for the President's initiative and exchanged views on several issues of national importance, including national security and the country's draft interim poverty reduction strategy.

4. The Presidential Commission that was established to investigate inter-ethnic land and property disputes in Nimba County and to make recommendations for the resolution of disputes that could impede the peaceful coexistence of ethnic communities in the County has completed its work and is in the process of finalizing its report. UNMIL is working closely with the Government and civil society organizations to address other inter-ethnic, religious, community and property

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disputes in various parts of the country. In this regard, the Mission has completed the mapping of potential conflict areas and is in the process of establishing district peace and reconciliation committees that will focus on conflict resolution.

5. The 29 August by-election to fill the House of Representatives District Number 2 seat in Margibi County, left vacant by the death of a representative from the ruling Unity Party, resulted in no candidate securing the required "50 per cent plus one" majority vote. As a result, on 12 September the National Elections Commission held a run-off election between the two candidates who had received the most votes. The candidate from the Congress for Democratic Change obtained 52 per cent of the votes, while the Unity Party candidate won 48 per cent of the votes. The winning candidate was inducted to the House of Representatives on 21 September, bringing the House back to its full membership of 64 members. However, another seat fell vacant shortly thereafter, following the death of the Unity Party representative for District Number 6 in Nimba County on 15 October. The National Elections Commission is currently organizing a by-election to fill this vacant seat.

6. During the reporting period, the President continued her efforts to combat corruption. In this regard, the President signed into law two acts ratifying the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. In addition, the Government has approved the Governance Reform Commission's anti-corruption policy statement and is currently considering a draft national anti-corruption strategy. A major proposal in this draft is the establishment of an anti-corruption commission, which would have investigative and prosecutorial powers. The Government is also considering draft legislation to grant the Governance Reform Commission full autonomy. In the meantime, the United Nations Democracy Fund has awarded the Government a $360,000 grant to support its anti-corruption initiatives.

7. As part of its efforts to curb corruption, the Ministry of Finance has improved the process for the payment of civil servant salaries, resulting in the removal of over 4,700 "ghost" workers from the Government's payroll. With the support of the international community, the Government is also streamlining its administrative structures and procedures. At the same time, in order to deal with the dearth of management capacity in the public sector, the Government, in collaboration with its development partners, is pursuing the establishment of a "senior executive service", which will be composed of qualified Liberians for senior administrative and technical positions.

8. The sixteenth session of the Ministerial Council of the Mano River Union was held in Monrovia on 18 and 19 October 2006. The meeting, which was attended by the ministers of economic planning of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, recommended a new organizational and salary structure for the Union's operations. It is hoped that this would assist in revitalizing this subregional organization, which has remained dormant for over 10 years owing to security and economic constraints. The budget is expected to be approved at the summit meeting of the Heads of State of the Mano River Union in January 2007.

III. Security situation

9. The security situation in Liberia remained generally calm during the reporting period, although there were minor disturbances caused by deactivated security service personnel who staged a series of demonstrations to demand benefits they claim are outstanding, including salary arrears. In this regard, President Johnson-Sirleaf directed her Cabinet, as well as the Inspector General of the Liberian National Police and the Director of the Special Security Services to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the total remaining salary arrears and pensions due to these deactivated personnel and to develop a plan for the liquidation of the arrears and the payment of pensions.

10. Operation "Sweeping Wave", which was launched on 8 September by President Johnson-Sirleaf in response to public concerns about the increase in reported criminal activities, especially armed robberies and rapes, has resulted in a significant reduction in violent crime in Monrovia and its environs. The exercise involved the conduct of cordon-and-search operations, as well as day and night patrols in high crime areas by the Liberian National Police and other security agencies, together with UNMIL. A National Joint Operations Centre, composed of representatives of UNMIL, the Ministry of Defence and national security agencies, was established to coordinate the operation.

11. UNMIL conducted a successful operation, referred to as "Exercise Tight Grip", on 27 and 28 October, to evaluate the Mission's capabilities and operational readiness to respond to a possible major deterioration in the security situation in Monrovia. The exercise also served to reassure residents of Monrovia of the Mission's active support of the security needs of the country.

12. The security situation along Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea remained stable during the reporting period. However, potential threats to the stability of Liberia include the possible movement of armed groups from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia, recruitment of former Liberian combatants, including children, by Ivorian militia groups and Liberians to fight in Côte d'Ivoire, and an influx of Ivorians seeking refuge in Liberia in the event of renewed hostilities in that country. UNMIL has, therefore, strengthened security along Liberia's borders to mitigate possible threats, including trafficking of arms. In addition, UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) conducted concurrent patrols along the Liberian-Ivorian border in "Operation Mayo" between 9 and 14 October, as well as from 27 November to 2 December. Similar patrols were undertaken during the same period with the Sierra Leonean forces along the Liberian-Sierra Leonean border in "Operation Loko". In addition, the first coordinated exercise between UNMIL and Guinean forces, referred to as "Operation Seskin", began along the Liberia-Guinea border. These exercises were aimed at demonstrating the presence of United Nations security forces in the border areas, establishing cross-border liaison and reassuring the local populations.

IV. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

A. Rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants

Reintegration of war-affected populations

13. At 15 November, some 39,000 ex-combatants had not yet been absorbed into reintegration programmes. However, it is expected that by July 2007, 16,624 of these former combatants will benefit from projects sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Trust Fund, and a further 22,544 will benefit from bilaterally funded programmes.

14. The Joint Implementation Unit, which consists of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation, UNMIL and UNDP, recently approved 10 new vocational skills training projects, which should absorb some 8,000 ex-combatants. So far, 3,000 ex-combatants have registered for these projects. In addition, former combatants have the option of enrolling in several formal education schemes.

15. UNMIL continued to collect and destroy residual weapons and ammunition that were voluntarily surrendered or discovered through search operations. Since the end of the disarmament and demobilization programme in November 2004, 632 weapons, 74,403 rounds of ammunition, 1,002 pieces of unexploded ordnance and 11,622 assorted spares and miscellaneous parts have been collected and destroyed. In addition, 230 rifles and guns, 19,935 rounds of ammunition, 457 magazines, bayonets and spares and 289 pieces of unexploded ordnance have been collected under the UNDP community arms collection for development programme, which was launched in January 2006.

B. Reform of the Liberian National Police

16. The restructuring and training of the Liberian National Police continued to make progress, although efforts to equip the police force and rehabilitate police infrastructure throughout the country continues to lag behind. At 1 December, 2,214 Liberian National Police had been trained and deployed, while 358 Special Security Services personnel and 155 Seaport Police officers had graduated from the National Police Academy. Currently, 566 police recruits are receiving field training, while 454 recruits are undergoing basic training. In order to reach the target of 3,500 trained Liberian National Police personnel by July 2007, the United Nations police, in collaboration with the Liberian National Police, has intensified the country-wide recruitment drive. The drive is also targeting civil society leaders and educational institutions in an effort to identify and attract young recruits. Some 300 candidates will need to be recruited by the end of December if the training programme is to be completed by the target date.

17. As part of its efforts to strengthen senior leadership capacities within the Liberian National Police, the United Nations police conducted a seven-week senior leadership training programme, which was attended by 31 senior Liberian National Police officers. The United Nations police conducted a similar course for 18 Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization officers and also provided in-service basic

training for 71 of these officers. In addition, 50 Liberian National Police officers received specialized training in different aspects of policing in Ghana and Egypt, and another 3 officers are currently undergoing a six-month cadet programme in Ghana. The United Nations police have also launched a refresher firearms training programme for the 300 police support unit personnel who underwent training in Nigeria in 2005. The firearms authorized by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia to be imported from Nigeria for use by the Liberian National Police in the conduct of their duties arrived in the country and were officially handed over to the Government of Liberia on 1 December.

18. The deployment of the Liberian National Police to the interior of the country continues to be hampered by the absence of basic infrastructure and the lack of police equipment, including vehicles and communications. However, UNDP, with the support of Japan, recently provided 22 motorcycles to the Liberian National Police for use in the interior of the country. In addition, with bilateral assistance provided by the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, as well as through the UNMIL quick-impact projects, police stations are being reconstructed or rehabilitated in Zorzor, Vahun, Foya and Voinjama in Lofa County; Ganta and Tappita in Nimba County; Soul Clinic Internally Displaced Persons Camp Community and Arthington Town in Montserrado County; Robertsport and Sinje in Grand Cape Mount County; Greenville, Sinoe County; Bopolu, Gbarpolu County; and Unification Town, Margibi County. The Liberian National Police headquarters in Monrovia is also being refurbished. At the same time, classrooms, dormitories and office space for training staff are being constructed at the National Police Training Academy. Despite these efforts, there are many police facilities in urgent need of rehabilitation.

C. Reform of the Armed Forces of Liberia

19. The United States continued to assist the Government with the recruitment and training of the new Armed Forces of Liberia. On 4 November, the first group of 106 recruits for the new army graduated from basic training at the Barclay Training Centre in Monrovia. These soldiers are currently undergoing further specialized training, which will end in December. Some 500 recruits for the next basic training class have been selected and are in the process of being notified. They will commence training in early 2007.

20. In line with the Ministry of Defence restructuring plan, about 130 middle-level personnel are undergoing a 17-week training programme funded by the United States at the Barclay Training Centre in Monrovia. The training is scheduled to end in March 2007, at which time 91 trainees will have been selected to occupy posts at the Ministry of Defence.

D. Consolidation of State authority

21. During the reporting period, limited progress was made in the restoration and consolidation of State authority throughout the country. Although some 74 district and township commissioners were selected for 8 of the 15 counties, the work of the

county officials and government line ministry representatives continued to be hampered by a lack of communications, office equipment, accommodation and vehicles, as well as delays in the payment of salaries. As a result of these constraints, many officials continued to commute from Monrovia to their duty stations.

22. The county support teams, which were jointly established by UNMIL and the United Nations country team to assist the local authorities in strengthening coordination mechanisms and in developing community recovery and development priorities, have continued to function effectively. In this regard, representatives of UNMIL, the United Nations country team, non-governmental institutions, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, county administration and government line ministries have been meeting on a monthly basis in each of the 15 counties to assess the priority needs of each county and to develop action plans to address these needs.

E. Management of natural resources

23. Steady progress was made by the Government in its efforts to regain control over and efficiently manage the country's natural resources. Following the full lifting of sanctions on timber exports on 20 October 2006, the Government took immediate steps to finalize regulations for the effective management of the timber industry. In addition, technical, institutional and financial reforms are being implemented at the Forestry Development Authority to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. UNMIL is also working closely with the Authority in the establishment of a national pit-sawing policy. In the meantime, unregulated pit-sawing continued to be conducted in several parts of the country.

24. The Forestry Development Authority, with the technical and logistical support of UNMIL, has been issuing permits for the transportation of timber in order to generate public revenue. Between April and November, the Authority issued 1,873 permits for the transportation of 695,480 pieces of timber resulting in public revenue of US$ 423,321, compared with US$ 62,262 for the same period in 2005.

25. In an effort to ensure that the conditions for the lifting of the Security Council sanctions on diamonds are met, President Johnson-Sirleaf established a National Diamond Task Force, which is being co-chaired by my Special Representative, Alan Doss, and the Minister of Land, Mines and Energy, to work on implementing the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. In addition, on 12 and 13 October, the Government convened a stakeholders' forum to prepare a national mineral policy for Liberia. The office of the Liberian Diamond Authority is currently being constructed with the support of the United States and UNMIL, while De Beers and other international partners are assisting in the training of Liberia's Diamond Authority personnel. In the meantime, illegal artisanal mining continued to be reported in the western part of the country and in Nimba and Sinoe counties.

26. UNMIL continued to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the joint Government of Liberia/UNMIL Rubber Plantation Task Force that was presented to the President on 23 May. The recommendations include the repossession of illegally occupied plantations by the Government, review of existing concession and management agreements and establishment of interim management teams for contested or abandoned plantations. In this regard, UNMIL provided support to the Government in re-establishing its

authority over the Guthrie Rubber Plantation. UNMIL also deployed military and police resources to support the Liberian National Police personnel stationed at the plantation. The interim management team, which was appointed by the Government, began commercial operations and is providing employment for more than 1,500 workers on the plantation. At the same time, some 200 registered ex-combatants and residents at the plantation have signed up to participate in reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, while many others have expressed their intention to seek employment on the plantation.

27. The Environmental Protection Agency is now fully operational, following the appointment of the board of directors and the executive director by the President. UNMIL, together with the United Nations Environment Programme, UNDP and other partners, is providing technical and logistical support to this important agency.

F. Promotion of human rights and the rule of law

1. Human rights

28. UNMIL continued its human rights promotion, protection and monitoring activities throughout the country. However, during the reporting period, respect for fundamental human rights continued to be impeded by weak rule of law structures. In this regard, the few operational county circuit courts in the country are either applying legal rules and procedures in an inconsistent manner or are failing to observe minimum human rights standards. Incidents of corrupt practices involving magistrates and judicial officials, inefficiency in trial processes and prolonged pretrial detention periods have also been reported. In some remote areas of the country, communities continued to practice trial by ordeal, in part owing to the absence of courts and police services.

29. The problems in the area of juvenile justice are yet to be fully addressed. There is only one functioning juvenile court in Monrovia. In a number of counties, juveniles are held in long-term pretrial detention with adults, without being indicted or tried, while in other locations they are sometimes tried by magistrates' court or released without trial.

30. More than 10 months after the enactment of the Rape Amendment Act, very little progress has been made in stemming the high incidence of sexual violence, including rape of women and girl children. The relevant provisions of the Act have not been uniformly applied by the magistrates and judges when trying rape cases and many cases are either not being investigated or brought before competent courts. In the few cases where rape trials took place, minimum sentences were handed down.

31. Detention conditions are still below minimum human rights standards. Some correction facilities, including the Monrovia Central Prison, remain overcrowded. In four facilities in Bong, Grand Bassa, Bomi and Margibi counties, detainees cited prolonged pretrial detention without adequate sanitation as reasons for prison riots. During the period under review, there was also increase in the number of jailbreaks, including by persons accused or convicted of rape. On 27 November, 57 inmates escaped from the maximum security prison in Monrovia. While eight of them have been recaptured, the remainder are still at large. An investigation is being conducted into the circumstances surrounding the escape.

32. During the reporting period, a consultant engaged by UNMIL conducted a human rights audit of key Liberian legislation to determine whether the laws conformed with international human rights standards and instruments that have been ratified and signed by the Government. The consultant concluded that there were several laws, including some provisions of the Constitution that were not in compliance with international human rights standards and instruments ratified by Liberia and recommended, inter alia, that the applicable laws be amended to comply with these standards.

33. UNMIL also released its fifth report on the human rights situation in Liberia. The report, which covered the period from May to July 2006, highlighted human rights violations by law enforcement and judicial officers, the human rights situation on rubber plantations and issues related to the protection of child rights. It also addressed corruption, the high rate of sexual and gender-based violence, in particular incidents involving child victims, and the use of harmful traditional practices. In addition, the Mission released a report on the human rights situation in 48 orphanages, which concluded that the conditions essential for the healthy development of children were not being met in many orphanages. The two reports contain a number of important recommendations, including on the need for the Government to take concrete steps to ratify all human rights treaties to which it is signatory, and to ensure the harmonization of domestic legislation with international human rights commitments.

34. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission commenced taking statements in the counties on 10 October. UNMIL assisted in training more than 200 statement-takers on the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights prior to their deployment. In addition, UNMIL continued to provide logistical support to the Commission and launched a programme on UNMIL Radio called "TRC in Action" to enhance public awareness of the activities of the Commission. Unfortunately, the Commission's operations are still hampered by financial and logistical constraints, as well as by inadequate management support. On 28 November, the Commission announced that it was suspending its statement-taking work because it had insufficient funds to pay the salaries of statement-takers. In this regard, I appeal to members of the international community to assist the Commission by generously providing the funds urgently required for it to complete its work.

35. Since my previous report, no further progress was made towards the establishment of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights. The Independent Selection Panel, which was established to vet nominees and submit a shortlist of nine candidates to serve as members of the Commission, agreed on 3 names out of 15 finalists for inclusion on the final shortlist. UNMIL has advised the Panel to submit the names of all finalists to the President for her consideration and appointment.

2. Support for the judicial system

36. During the reporting period, court activities increased throughout the country, in particular trials for serious offences, such as murder, rape and armed robbery. One reason for the increased activity was the engagement of national lawyers, with UNMIL support, to serve as prosecutorial and public defence consultants for indigent defendants. However, the justice system continues to be constrained by the lack of court buildings and a dearth of qualified judicial and legal personnel.

37. UNMIL continued to expand its capacity-building activities in the counties by providing training for legal and judicial officers. The Mission also conducted workshops to enhance the practical and procedural capacities of legal and judicial officers. In addition, some 261 magistrates were trained by UNMIL between May and November 2006. UNDP has also funded the recruitment of a Liberian expert to support the Governance Reform Commission's work on rule of law and the strengthening of the judiciary.

38. In September, the Mission launched a radio programme entitled "Community Court" to sensitize the public on the operations of the justice system and fundamental rights. The radio programme has already addressed the issues of domestic violence, payment of child maintenance, landlord and tenant disputes and trial by ordeal.

39. Significant progress was made in the establishment of the Law Reform Commission. The task force constituted by the Minister of Justice to facilitate the establishment of the Commission organized a series of stakeholders' symposiums and public interactive forums, following which a draft law for the establishment of the Commission was finalized and submitted to the Minister of Justice on 25 September. The Commission will require funding and the sustained support of the Government and the international community in order to be effective.

3. Support for the corrections system

40. UNMIL continued to assist the national Bureau of Rehabilitation and Corrections in improving the conditions of correctional facilities throughout the country. The refurbishment work on the facilities, which is being funded by Norway and the United States, is at various stages of completion. While the refurbishment of the Harper and Buchanan prisons has been completed, the rehabilitation of the Monrovia and Bondiway prisons, as well as the Zwedru Palace of Corrections, is still ongoing. The contract to refurbish the Gbarnga prison had to be terminated owing to the inability of the contractor to implement the project. UNMIL is also utilizing its quick-impact project funds to improve the facilities in Voinjama and Sanniquellie. While, the Government has made occasional contributions of foodstuff and medical supplies to the Monrovia Central Prison, prisoners continued to receive food and other supplies from the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross and other partners.

41. Since the training programme for corrections officers commenced in February 2005, UNMIL has trained a total of 79 corrections officers. During the reporting period, 20 corrections officer recruits graduated from the Police Academy, while 25 recruits are currently in the first phase of basic training. The Mission's corrections and prison advisory service conducted a training-the-trainers course for 12 national correction officers, who will subsequently carry out training programmes for corrections officers at the National Police Academy.

42. Owing to budgetary constraints, the Government has been able to absorb only 25 out of the 79 newly trained correction officers into the civil service. Moreover, because of low salaries many trained officers have left the corrections service to join the Liberian National Police and the Armed Forces of Liberia, which offer higher wages. This loss of trained personnel has severely hampered the effectiveness of the corrections service. In the meantime, the criteria for the retrenchment of serving

officers who do not meet the civil service requirements have been developed and submitted to the Government for consideration and approval.

G. Economic governance

43. Steady progress continued to be made in the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme. The Economic Governance Steering Committee met regularly to monitor progress in the implementation of the Programme and the internationally recruited experts submitted monthly status reports of their activities to the Steering Committee. There are currently eight international experts with co-signatory powers working with Liberia revenue-generating entities. During the period under review, a Liberian national was selected for a position funded by the World Bank of communications coordinator assigned to the Presidency to assist the Government in enhancing public awareness of the Programme. A consultant sponsored by the European Commission also commenced his assignment with the Bureau of Customs. The Government, in collaboration with international partners, is currently conducting a self-evaluation review on the implementation of the Programme after its first year of operation.

44. The Contracts and Concessions Review Committee of the Public Procurement and Concession Commission continued to review contracts and concessions entered into by the National Transitional Government of Liberia. Although the Review Committee has suffered some setbacks owing to operational and logistical constraints, as at 23 November 2006 it had completed the initial review of 79 out of 186 contracts, and was in the process of reviewing a further 21 contracts. In response to concerns that further delays in concluding the reviews could adversely affect Liberia's economic and investment climate, the President has stated that the review process must be completed by 31 December 2006. In the meantime, with the support of UNMIL, a local and international lawyer have been engaged to work with the Review Committee, while the European Commission has deployed experts to facilitate the review process.

H. National recovery, reconstruction and development

45. The Government continued to treat employment generation as a major priority. With the support of international stakeholders, the Government is creating short-term employment opportunities, including for ex-combatants, through the labour-intensive rehabilitation of roads and other critical infrastructure throughout the country. In October 2006, UNDP, UNMIL and the World Bank launched a joint initiative to rehabilitate critical roads, to which UNMIL is contributing technical expertise and engineering assets and the World Bank is providing funding through UNDP. The first project to be implemented under this initiative was the rehabilitation of the Voinjama-Zorzor road in the north-western part of the country. A total of 1,200 community members and ex-combatants have already benefited from this initiative. In addition, the Mission's military engineers are rehabilitating secondary and feeder roads with the support of the WFP "Food support to local initiatives" programme and the Ministry of Public Works. This initiative has provided short-term employment for over 5,000 ex-combatants and members of their communities. UNMIL has also used its quick-impact projects to enhance employment creation.

46. Under the Liberia Employment Action Programme, which is intended to provide long-term sustainable employment, the Government, together with its international partners, is focusing on creating long-term employment opportunities, particularly in the agricultural sector, through the distribution of seeds and tools to farmers, and agricultural skills training.

47. An International Monetary Fund mission visited Liberia from 5 to 17 November 2006 to assess the progress made under the Fund's staff-monitored programme for 2006 and to discuss with the Government the design of the successor programme for 2007. The mission projected that there would be an 8 per cent increase in the real gross domestic product in 2006 and reiterated its support for finding a solution to Liberia's external debt problem.

48. The Government is in the process of finalizing its interim poverty reduction strategy, which will be presented at the Partners Forum planned for 13 and 14 February 2007 in Washington, D.C. The Forum, which will be co-sponsored by the European Commission, the United Nations, the United States and the World Bank, will bring together the Government of Liberia and its partners to discuss the country's reconstruction and development strategy as defined in the interim poverty reduction strategy paper, and to confirm the resource requirements to implement that strategy.

V. Humanitarian activities

49. To date, 81,000 refugees have voluntarily returned to their places of origin with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The repatriation of the remaining 139,000 refugees continued to be hampered by poor road conditions, which were made worse by the rainy season. The repatriation efforts are expected to increase at the start of the dry season in November. Meanwhile, the Government, with the support of UNHCR, has repatriated more than 3,000 of the 5,500 internally displaced persons who had continued to reside in and around camps after their official closure on 20 April.

50. During the reporting period, there was tangible progress in the health sector. The country achieved almost 100 per cent immunization for early childhood diseases, and reproductive health care also improved. Cholera, however, was a serious public health concern, with 3,127 persons reported to have been infected by the disease in various parts of the country. There was also a national awareness campaign to prevent the outbreak of Lassa fever. Although no single case of Avian Influenza has been reported, the World Health Organization, with the support of the United Nations country team and UNMIL, has prepared a contingency plan for responding to the disease.

51. To date, the 2006 United Nations consolidated appeal for Liberia has received 45 per cent of the estimated US$ 145 million required for humanitarian activities. In order to address the funding shortfall, the Emergency Relief Coordinator provided Liberia with a US$ 4 million grant, through the Central Emergency Response Fund, to support life-saving projects, including water and sanitation, health, food and agriculture. I renew my request to donors to generously provide the required assistance to meet the needs set out in the consolidated appeal.

VI. Gender

52. The Mission's Gender Adviser Unit facilitated the development of a mission-wide action plan, with benchmarks, for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. The Unit also continued to deliver gender analysis training to UNMIL personnel. In addition, UNMIL collaborated with and provided technical support to the Ministry of Gender and Development to ensure that gender considerations inform the mechanisms that guide the early recovery and reconstruction process. The Mission also supported the efforts of the Government and women's organizations to prepare a national action plan to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

VII. HIV/AIDS

53. The Mission's HIV/AIDS Unit continued to collaborate with the Mission's integrated training cell to conduct HIV/AIDS awareness, training and sensitization, as well as personal risk assessment sessions, as part of induction training for military, police and civilian personnel. The Unit also collaborated with the Mission's gender component to provide training to female uniformed personnel on women's vulnerability to HIV infection. In addition, the Unit continued to promote HIV/AIDS awareness through its participation in an UNMIL Radio phone-in programme. In order to meet the rise in demand for voluntary counselling and testing by UNMIL personnel, another voluntary counselling and testing centre has been opened at the Jordanian Level III Hospital.

VIII. Personnel conduct and discipline

54. The UNMIL Conduct and Discipline Team continued to focus on developing strategies to prevent, identify, report and effectively respond to all categories of United Nations personnel misconduct. It also focused on strategies to ensure the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse through training, awareness-raising and attention to welfare concerns of all categories of United Nations personnel. Outreach programmes for local civil society organizations and communities living in close proximity to United Nations facilities are also being developed and implemented. On 4 November, with the support of the United Nations In-Country Network, the Government launched a one-year national awareness campaign aimed at strengthening advocacy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse throughout Liberia.

55. Some 40 "Category 1" offences, including 28 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, and 155 "Category 2" offences have been reported since January 2006. All cases are under investigation.

IX. Public information

56. The public information component continued to support several of the Mission's priority programmes, the United Nations agencies, the Government and civil society aimed at consolidating the peace process, encouraging reconciliation and promoting national recovery. The component also organized several community

sporting events to promote national reconciliation. A nationwide sporting event is being planned for February 2007 with US$ 75,000 worth of sports equipment and materials donated by the International Olympic Committee. The Mission held a nationwide talent competition for Liberian youth under the age of 20 years to sensitize them about HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, through the employment of groups of traditional communicators, it conducted awareness-raising campaigns about Lassa fever control in Nimba County, and about voter and civic education for the Margibi County by-election. The Mission has also established a media centre, equipped with research and Internet facilities, as well as a conference room for media practitioners.

X. Adjustment of the Mission

A. Military component

57. As at 1 December 2006, UNMIL's troop strength stood at 14,311 out of an authorized strength of 15,125. The discrepancy between the authorized and actual troop strength emanates from the delayed arrival of the advance company of the quick reaction force from Pakistan, which is expected to be deployed by the end of December. Also, UNMIL had earlier repatriated a company from Namibia in accordance with Security Council resolution 1626 (2005). Given the relative stability that has prevailed since the inauguration of the new Government and based on the detailed assessment provided in my tenth progress report (S/2006/159), which remains valid, on 28 November the Mission commenced the repatriation of one infantry battalion, which it does not intend to replace. As proposed in my previous reports, further adjustments, including the withdrawal of another infantry battalion in 2007, will be considered if the security situation in the country permits.

58. UNMIL continued to provide security to the Special Court for Sierra Leone in accordance with Security Council resolution 1626 (2005). During the reporting period, the 250-strong Mongolian military guard unit responsible for guarding the Special Court's premises completed a series of exercises aimed at ensuring the Court's security.

B. Police component

59. As at 1 December, the Mission's police strength stood at 1,098 officers, out of an authorized ceiling of 1,240 officers, which includes 6 United Nations police immigration officers, 479 officers in 4 formed police units and 15 corrections officers. A fifth formed police unit, comprising 125 personnel, is expected to arrive in the Mission by January 2007 to support the efforts of the Liberian National Police in containing threats to public order in Monrovia and other urban centres, as well as on rubber plantations. Owing to the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the Liberian National Police, all efforts are being made to ensure the expeditious deployment of qualified United Nations police officers and coordinators to the Mission.

XI. Benchmarks for the first phase of the consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal plan

60. In my September report (S/2006/743, para. 72), I set out a series of benchmarks against which progress would be measured during the first phase of the consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal of UNMIL, which is currently under way. Some progress has been made in meeting these broad benchmarks, which include security, governance and the rule of law, economic revitalization, and infrastructure and basic services.

61. With regard to the security benchmark, as indicated in paragraphs 16 to 18 above, the recruitment target of 3,500 trained police officers by July 2007 is likely to be met. However, the effective deployment of these officers continues to be hampered by logistical and management constraints. With respect to the new armed forces, while the basic training has commenced, only 106 recruits out of the targeted 2,000 strong army have so far received basic training. It is expected that the new army will not be fully operational until 2008 at the earliest. Moreover, the Government is yet to take a final decision on the country's complete security architecture. In the case of ex-combatants, some 39,000 out of an initial caseload of 101,495 ex-combatants have yet to access reintegration programmes.

62. Progress in meeting the governance and rule of law benchmarks has been slow, owing primarily to the funding and capacity constraints explained in paragraphs 28 to 42 above. Corrections facilities have been established in only 7 of the 15 counties in Liberia. In addition, the county superintendents and assistant superintendents for development are also not fully operational in all 15 counties owing to capacity and human resource constraints. There is also a marked absence of critical line ministries, including health, education and public works in many of the counties, for which external funding is urgently required.

63. The progress made in meeting the economic revitalization benchmarks as described in paragraphs 23 to 27 and paragraphs 43 and 44 is very encouraging. There was a marked improvement in financial management and revenue administration in the public sector, as well as an increase in custom and excise duties as a result of the effective implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme. However, additional steps will need to be taken to improve procurement practices and to complete the review of concessions and contracts by the 31 December deadline given by the President. It will be important for international partners to expedite the deployment of promised specialist expertise to assist in the completion of these tasks. While the progress made in the Government's management of the timber sector is encouraging, much work remains to be done in order to meet the conditions for the lifting of diamond sanctions.

64. The restoration of street lighting and piped water in parts of Monrovia have been the most visible indicators of progress in meeting the benchmarks identified under the infrastructure and basic services pillar. As referred to in paragraph 45, the World Bank/UNMIL joint infrastructure and employment programme is also helping with the development of critical infrastructure. However, the limited extension of public health services to the counties remains a critical concern. Currently, the country is heavily dependent on non-governmental organizations, which provide about 90 per cent of the primary health care and hospital services.

65. A full update on the progress made in meeting each of these benchmarks will be provided in the next progress report on UNMIL, and subsequently on a six-monthly basis at the time of each mandate renewal.

XII. Observations

66. The Government of President Johnson-Sirleaf has continued to make encouraging progress in consolidating peace, promoting national reconciliation and stimulating economic recovery. The three branches of Government functioned in relative harmony; the reform and restructuring of the security sector is progressing; more Liberian refugees have returned home; and the Government has continued to take robust measures to fight corruption.

67. The successful adoption of the forestry reform law, through sustained negotiations between the Senate and the House of Representatives, is a positive indication that the Government of Liberia can overcome partisan positions in the national interest. I wish to encourage the executive and legislative branches of Government to continue to employ constructive dialogue to resolve policy differences that may arise.

68. I would like to commend President Johnson-Sirleaf for her initiatives in bringing together members of various religious and ethnic groupings, as well as political party leaders. I encourage the President to continue to work towards involving all Liberians in the country's recovery process and appeal to all political and civil society leaders to continue their constructive engagement in the reconstruction and reform processes currently under way.

69. As indicated in paragraphs 60 to 64, some progress has been made in meeting the Mission's consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal benchmarks. While these developments are promising, serious challenges persist that must be addressed if progress is to be sustained. I call upon the Government to expeditiously finalize its national security strategy and policy and prepare a comprehensive national security architecture that will allow Liberian security agencies to sustain the stable security environment currently ensured by the presence of UNMIL. This is also a crucial element in the planning and management of the drawdown of UNMIL forces. At the same time, I urge Liberia's international partners to urgently provide assistance in addressing the outstanding logistical and infrastructure needs of the security sector, particularly those of the national police.

70. The management and operational capacities of the national police force still need to be strengthened to enable the Liberian National Police to effectively assume security responsibilities prior to UNMIL withdrawal. With this critical objective in mind, a review team from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will travel to Liberia in early 2007 to assess the impact of the work of the UNMIL police component on the capacity development of the Liberian National Police. In the meantime, everything possible should be done to operationalize the new police and to expedite the deployment of the Liberian National Police to the countryside.

71. The presence of large numbers of unemployed youth in the urban centres, ex-combatants still awaiting reintegration opportunities, and deactivated police and army personnel, remains a very serious source of tension. I encourage the Government to intensify its efforts to revive economic activity and to create job

opportunities for the unemployed, including former combatants, without which the security of the country will be undermined. In that regard, I reiterate my earlier appeal for donor support to the Government's employment generation initiatives. I also urge international partners to continue to work closely with the Government to ensure that the remaining former combatants who have not yet entered rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are provided with opportunities to do so in an expeditious manner.

72. Although the Government has continued to make progress in the consolidation of its authority throughout the country, much remains to be done to enhance its capacity to deliver public services, including judicial and legal services, to all parts of the country. In the meantime, it is gratifying to note that the efforts of the Government to take control of natural and mineral resources, especially in the forestry and rubber sectors, are beginning to bear fruit, as demonstrated by the increase in public revenues. In this regard, I commend the Government for the timely passage of the forestry reform law. The establishment of the National Diamond Task Force is also a welcome development that will assist in ensuring that the conditions necessary for the lifting of the Security Council sanctions are met.

73. The reform of the judicial sector and the promotion of the rule of law continue to present major structural challenges that will require the generous assistance of the international community. The effective countrywide administration of justice is not only a prerequisite for the people of Liberia to fully enjoy their basic rights, but is also essential for economic growth. I appeal to donors to provide the funding required for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Independent National Human Rights Commission to become fully operational.

74. I am deeply concerned by the high incidence of sexual violence, including rape committed against women and girl children in Liberia, as well as by the spate of violent crime in Monrovia and elsewhere in the country. In that regard, the swift action taken by the Government in establishing operation "Sweeping Wave" aimed at curbing criminal activities is commendable. Every effort must be made to ensure that criminal justice is rapidly and fairly addressed and that widespread violence against women and children is brought to an end.

75. In conclusion, I would like to commend the people and Government of Liberia, my Special Representative, Alan Doss, and all UNMIL military, police and civilian personnel for the progress accomplished during the reporting period. I would also like to thank all troop and police-contributing countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the International Contact Group on the Mano River Basin, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions and support to the peace consolidation process in Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and civilian police strength (at 1 December 2006)

Component	*Military*				*Police*
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officer*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Argentina					8
Bangladesh	17	11	3 181	3 209	29
Benin	3	1		4	
Bolivia	4			4	
Bosnia and Herzegovina					11
Brazil					
Bulgaria	2			2	
China	5	8	558	571	23
Croatia		3		3	
Czech Republic	3			3	5
Denmark	4			4	
Ecuador	1	1		2	
El Salvador	3			3	2
Ethiopia	19	8	2 301	2 328	
Egypt	8			8	
Fiji					30
Finland		2		2	
France		1		1	
Gambia	4			4	32
Germany			14	14	7
Ghana	13	7	849	869	41
Indonesia	3			3	
Ireland		1	325	326	
Jamaica					8
Jordan	7	8	119	134	140
Kenya	5	3		8	27
Kyrgyzstan	4			4	3
Macedonia					1
Malawi		2		2	19
Malaysia	10			10	
Mali	3			3	
Moldova	3	1		4	
Mongolia		2	248	250	
Montenegro	2			2	

Component	*Military*				*Police*
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officer*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Namibia	2	2	609	613	6
Nepal	5	2	40	47	256
Niger	3			3	
Nigeria	19	14	1 949	1 982	162
Norway					10
Pakistan	16	10	2 737	2 763	28
Paraguay	3			3	
Peru	1			1	
Philippines	3	5	165	173	34
Poland	2			2	3
Portugal					
Republic of Korea	1	1		2	
Romania	3			3	
Russian Federation	6			6	11
Rwanda					15
Samoa					16
Senegal	3	3	599	605	
Serbia	4			4	7
South Africa					
Sri Lanka					11
Sweden		3		3	13
Togo	2	1		3	
Turkey					33
Uganda					20
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		3		3	
Ukraine	3	1	300	304	13
Uruguay					3
United States of America	5	6		11	10
Yemen					4
Zambia	3			3	26
Zimbabwe					31
Total	**207**	**110**	**13 994**	**14 311**	**1 098**

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Cartographic Section